

Just Say You Won't Let Go by TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

El wakes up from a nightmare.

Just Say You Won't Let Go

Author's Note:

This is dedicated to Aimee, whose fic about Mike dying made me so emotional I had to write this to cope.

El bolted up in bed, all the memories coming back to her.

She was used to nightmares, they had haunted her for her entire life. Images of the lab, the Demogorgon, and the Upside Down were constantly creeping into her mind at night. But she never had a nightmare like this before, and never had a nightmare felt so real.

She was panting as the memories came back to her. This nightmare was of one of her greatest fears, something that overwhelmed her mind since she was twelve years old, but seeing it happen in her dream, it all just felt so real. She couldn't shake the image of seeing it happen.

Blankets were quickly thrown off the bed, Mike grumbled in his sleep next to her. Normally El woke up her husband when she had nightmares, but she couldn't do it this time. Not after that dream.

Her panting left a dry mouth and El could only think of one thing she needed-- water. So she raced towards the small kitchen of her apartment, the fear of her dream not yet fading.

Water poured into the glass and El pulled it to her lips, chugging the water as if it would solve the growing paranoia in her chest. The water started to spill from her mouth, flowing down her cheeks while she couldn't be bothered to wipe it away.

When she drank the whole glass, El slammed it down onto the counter, her eyes closing for a moment as she shuddered, remembering when she had done this in her dream. She remembered coming into her kitchen, getting water in hopes that it would help her feel better. It didn't help in the dream however, and it didn't help her now.

El squeezed her eyes shut harder, hoping that if she couldn't see the kitchen, then the memory of her dream couldn't haunt her. She thought the blackness would help her clear her mind. But El didn't see the darkness of her closed eyes, instead her brain brought up a worse memory from the nightmare, a new horrific image creeping into her mind.

Her eyes bolted open, adjusting to the faint light she had turned on. She wanted to erase all images from the dream out of her mind, so she started to look all around her kitchen, taking in all the sights in hope for distraction.

El spun around to see a figure at the entrance of the kitchen, her heart jumped upon seeing the shadow, but then she realized it was just Mike. He was still half-asleep, yawning while his hand was brushing down his signature bedhead. El let out a breath of relief upon seeing him, Mike never hesitated to make her feel safe, even just his presence made everything better for her.

"Why are you up?" She asked him, not wanting to sound as if anything was out of the ordinary.

"I felt you get out of bed. Is everything okay?"

Mike raised his eyebrows at her and El looked away. She couldn't lie to him, and he knew she wasn't okay. She always joked that Mike was more in tune with her emotions than she was, he always seemed to know exactly what was going on with her. He called it intuition, but she never believed that. Mike just cared, he cared so much more than most people care about others. It's easy to understand someone when you love them with all the heart and passion that Mike loved El with.

El looked up at Mike, meeting his eyes and hoping he would understand. He stared at her for a second, then nodded as he came to his conclusion.

"A nightmare?"

El closed her eyes again, feeling tears well up as she thought about the dream. She took one deep breath. In and out, just as she had been

practicing since Joyce Byers first taught her to deal with nightmares when she was 13 years old. When she felt her heart slow down she opened her eyes and nodded, and it took only a second before Mike had raced across the room and enveloped her into a hug.

She relaxed as soon as she felt his arms around her, holding her close. Mike was El's safe place, being with him was the one thing that made everything feel alright. That fact had made her nightmare all the more horrifying, but being with Mike made her feel protected, he made her feel safe to open up to.

The tears she had so desperately tried to push away before were now breaking free, and El didn't suppress them anymore. She buried her face into Mike's chest, and the only thing that held her together was his hand, stroking her back reassuringly. Her tears stained the grey tee shirt he was wearing, the same shirt El loved to steal from him. It always smelled exactly like him, it made El feel like Mike was around her constantly. Her face hid itself in his shirt, letting all the bottled-up fears come out.

"Was it the lab?" Mike whispered into her ear, cautious whether or not he should ask.

El shook her head and he tried again, "Upside Down?"

Eleven took one deep breath and pulled her head from out of his chest. Mike kept his hands on her back, and she threw her arms around his neck, pushing her fingers through his hair.

"You."

"What?" Mike's eyebrows scrunched together.

El's hands moved around his head, eventually landing on his cheeks before she continued on, "The nightmare. It was of you."

"I- I didn't hurt you, did I? Because I would nev-"

She shook her head frantically, cutting him off. El shut her eyes, preparing herself to share the events of her nightmare, "We were 17 again, and you wanted to take me somewhere. So we were in your car and you were driving, when another car came out of nowhere

and hit us,” Mike's eyes widened as he heard El, “Th- Then I was back here, and it was the present day, and you had been dead for years.”

El didn't want to think about her nightmare anymore, throwing herself back into his chest. The tears that flowed from her face like a river before, had now turned into a stormy ocean, with violent waves falling from her eyes.

“El,” He whispered, his arms snaking around her and clutching on tighter than before, “I'm okay El, I'm right here.”

She started to hiccup through the tears, her breath hitching, “It felt so real.”

Mike didn't know how to respond, he kissed her forehead and wished he knew how to comfort her in a situation like this. Her nightmares were normally memories of the past, it was a matter of just reassuring her that it was all over, the bad men and the Demogorgon couldn't hurt her anymore. This nightmare wasn't something that had happened, though, it was something she was terrified of happening, and Mike didn't know how to comfort her from this.

“I thought I lost you.”

He pulled out of the hug and instead grabbed onto El's face, her eyes were big as they stared up at him, and he could see all of her fears in them. Mike could see her feelings of powerlessness, of terror, of grief, all radiating brightly from her eyes, all just screaming that she didn't want to be hurt, “You're never ever going to lose me, El. I promise.”

“You can't promise that.” She shook her head, tears shaking down her cheeks, which he quickly brushed aside with his thumbs, “You can't know what's going to happen.”

“You're right, I don't know what's going to happen. But I still know you're never going to lose me, you know why?”

Eleven didn't answer, waiting for Mike's response, “Because I thought I lost you. For a whole year I thought you were gone, and that I was never going to see you again. But then you came back, and I realized, all that grief I'd been dealing with was unnecessary, because you

were always gonna come back to me. We're never going to lose each other El, at least not for forever. In the end it's always going to be you and me."

El smiled at him through the tears. His voice was so reassuring, it always made her feel better to hear him talk. She cupped his cheeks and stood up onto her toes to give him a quick kiss. His lips tasted like salt, and that's when El realized he had been crying too. She didn't know what she ever did to deserve Mike, or how she got so lucky to have someone like him to love so much, to have someone who took on all her emotions with her, who cried when she cried, who stayed up with her at 2am when she was crying in their kitchen from a nightmare.

"I don't ever want to think about losing you."

Mike reached down and grabbed her hand, giving a short squeeze of reassurance, "Then don't, because I'm right here, and for all of eternity I will be right here with you. Nothing can stop that."

Eleven squeezed his hand back, and he offered to make some coffee if she wanted to stay up talking. She declined and together they walked back to their bedroom. El fell asleep that night cradled in Mike's arms, and as she drifted off into a land of dreams once more, the thought of losing Mike was as far from her mind as possible.

She wasn't naive, she knew there were infinite possibilities out in the world that could take Mike from her. But she also knew one important thing, her and Mike were stronger than any of those possibilities, and nothing in the world would ever take them away from each other.

Mike pulled her into his arms, and in that moment, it felt as if he was never planning to let go.